

2<sup>nd</sup> July 2022

## Look

**“You always avoid eye contact, you know.  
Are you afraid of something?”**

Spike Lee, *Blues* ((Film-script, as spoken by Clarke Bentancourt)

*Fahrenheit 451* is a 1953 novel by Ray Bradbury. Based on his own short story, “The Fireman”, it tells of Guy Montag, a fireman in a futuristic society where books are banned and firemen create fires rather than put them out. They do this to protect people from the supposed dangers of reading. Bradbury unfolds not only the exploits of Montag in this context, but also the self-examination which ensues. It makes fascinating reading.

At one point, he has of one of his characters say this:

*You're not like the others. I've seen a few; I know. When I talk, you look at me. When I said something about the moon, you looked at the moon, last night. The others would never do that. The others would walk off and leave me talking. Or threaten me. No one has time any more for anyone else. You're one of the few who put up with me.*

“When I talk, you look at me ...” My work as a hospice chaplain sometimes entailed lengthy and taxing conversations around end-of-life and bereavement issues. On other occasions, the conversations were short, “seize-the-moment” interactions, with no opportunity for follow-up or further exploration. In these very different circumstances, one thing was always crucial: “When I talk, you look at me.” Eye-contact, concentration, treating that person as the most important person in the world, and treating that moment as the most important moment in their life, was always vital. “When I talk, you look at me ...”

Have you ever felt devalued because someone didn't look at you? Have you had a moment when you needed someone's concentration and it wasn't there? What about the person you were introduced to who was looking over your shoulder to see if someone more interesting had come into the room? Or might *you* have been the person who communicated that you didn't really want to engage, unwilling to give someone the time they need in that moment? Was eye-contact avoided because someone was afraid of something? Or could someone say of you today: “You're not like the others ... You're one of the few who put up with me”?

### **A prayer for today**

*Lord, I look you in the eye, and discover you're still looking straight at me! Amen*

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